

Career Shop



| Winning
Interviews

Winning Interviews

Make a positive impression on employers in a job interview:

- Prepare for one-on-one, phone, or panel interviews
- Introduce yourself for lasting impact
- Create your professional and personal profile

Presented by the Human Services Agency
in cooperation with the Ventura County Workforce Investment Board.

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Introduction

What is an interview? Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary defines it as:

- 1 a formal consultation usually to evaluate qualifications (as of a prospective student or employee)
- 2 a meeting at which information is obtained (as by a reporter, television commentator, or pollster) from a person;
or
a report or reproduction of information so obtained.

But what is an interview really? It is a sales job, and the product you are selling is yourself. You know by the advertisements you see in print and on television that to be successful, you have to have a consistent message and name recognition.

The same is true when it comes to marketing yourself to companies. You want to establish your own brand, be able to sell yourself as a valuable product, and convince the hiring managers that you are the best brand for their job. Branding yourself means you are looking at yourself as a total package, inside and out.

During this Career Shop, our focus will be on developing your brand from the inside out. We'll start by preparing your profiles and your 30-second summary. From there, you'll get your story straight, and then we'll switch our focus to the outer you: your presentation, clothing, body language, handshake, and introduction. Finally, we'll talk about the actual interviews, discuss different types of interviews and how to handle them, and how to follow up and stay on top of your job search.

Tell Me About Yourself or Walk Me Through Your Resume

Very often, the first question that interviewers ask is a general question about you. They are not interested in your personal life, whether you are married with children or single, or what your hobbies are. What is it they are really looking for when they ask you this question?

In this question, and in fact, through the whole interview, they are looking for the three A's:

Ability: Can the candidate do what they say?

Attitude: Will the candidate do what they say?

Adaptability: Will the candidate fit into our company (adjust to company culture)?

Additionally they wonder: **How much does the candidate cost?**

Do your salary and benefit requirements fit within the range that the employer has established for the position?

Interviewers Are People Too!

Remember that interviewers are people, too, and you are probably not the only nervous one at your interview. Interviewers are often uneasy during the hiring process because:

You are probably not the only nervous one at your interview. Interviewers are often uneasy during the hiring process because:

- They feel pressured because they have a limited amount of time (usually not more than an hour) to decide if you right for the job. They are afraid to make a bad hire. The process of hiring and training people is expensive. An employer needs to make sure they have got the right person for the job before they put resources into them. Also, if the other workers do not like the new employee, the interviewer will be held responsible.
- They are not trained to interview people. Many interviewers have risen into managerial positions, but they do not have the training in how to select new employees.
- They do not want to have to turn people down. There are usually a limited number of open positions and a large number of applicants. The interviewer does not like being put in the position of saying "no" to someone they really like.

Your job is to ease the fears of the interviewer(s). This Career Shop is designed to ease your fear, so that you can convince the interviewer that hiring you is a "No Brainer."

Branding – Establishing Yourself as the “Brand” That Is You

The ability to establish yourself as a unique brand requires that you fully know yourself.

Catherine Kaputa is a 20-year veteran of branding and advertising and the founder of SelfBrand, a brand-strategy firm that works with people, products, and companies. Kaputa has written about the most positive, authentic and noble form of personal branding in her book, *U R a Brand!: How Smart People Brand Themselves for Business Success*, from which the following quotation is taken:

A person represents a skill set. A self-brand represents a Big Idea, a belief system that other people find special and relevant. Self-branding is more than your name, identity, and image. It is everything you do to differentiate and market yourself, such as your messages, self-presentation, and marketing tactics. Your ability to maximize the asset that is you is the single most important ingredient in your success.

If I was to think of one universal truth [of personal branding], it's this whole idea of building it out of authenticity. And really looking at what is different and unique about you, and highlight that difference. The key thing that branding is really about is differentiating yourself. So, it's looking at authenticity and differentiation. Not being afraid to stand apart and highlight that and to make that a powerful thing ... and memorable. That will make you successful.

Establish the Brand That Is You in the Interview.

The interview provides the best opportunity to:

- Package and deliver your personal value proposition
- Identify your skills, abilities and experiences
- Highlight the value that you will add to that specific company

The skills, abilities and values that you develop in your personal value proposition should come together concisely in the interview through your answers to the company's questions.

Personal Value Proposition

Identifies your:
Strengths
Values
Transferable skills



Resume

Showcase
your skills via
your previous
experiences



Interview

Allows you to apply
your skills and
experiences to the
company's specific
needs

Profiles/Propositions

Create a profile of your unique selling or marketing points. You cannot dictate what sort of questions you will be asked, but you can repeatedly weave these details into your answers. Never assume the interviewers will have read your resume already.

You must always do your best to market yourself and make sure that the interviewers fully understand that you can do what you say you can do, that you will do what you say you will do, and that you have the ability, flexibility and adaptability to fit into their company.

Professional/Personal Value Proposition

This is your opportunity to tell the employer what separates you from others with the same skills and experience. Values in this instance translate to work ethic. Keep in mind that sometimes different values will apply to different industries. A contract worker does not necessarily need to be at work on time every day, since they usually set their own hours, but if you are working on a production line, being punctual is probably a very important trait.

Example:

I am an ambitious, organized and highly motivated individual who is goal driven and excels at building long-term customer relationships. Winning the national sales award shows my ability to manage people and demonstrates outstanding team performance. Occasionally I am intolerant of incompetence. After hours, I enjoy fitness training and recreational volleyball.

Professional Profiles (skills, abilities and experience)

It's important to describe any specialized skill or knowledge you may have. Examples could be using tools and equipment, a specialized procedure or any type of specialized training, certification, or licensing (for example, computer programming, operating a forklift, accounting, child or elder care, data entry, etc.).

Example #1

I am an experienced sales professional with five years of experience in the automotive industry, specializing in corporate fleets. I have the ability to diversify into commercial vehicle sales, with strong product knowledge, and a particularly good understanding of market trends and competitors. I am confident in my leadership skills and know that I can direct a regional team.

Example #2

For the past four years, I have used Microsoft Word for numerous correspondence and interoffice procedures. My training and skills with office machinery, along with my ability to interact with both staff and clients, has led to my being recognized as Employee of the Month three times. I have reorganized office clerical functions to create more efficient workflow, including setting up mail and filing systems for two different companies. I am certain that my overall experience in office systems is a good fit for the position you are currently looking to fill. As you know, had XYZ not downsized, I would still be employed. After researching your company, I am impressed with your emphasis on manufacturing quality products.

Example #3

My experience in warehousing is characterized by over five years of on-the-job consistency. I have been very successful in recording and tracking product and have increased production due to the improvement in ability to track and locate items for shipping. I am a certified forklift operator and can use electric, gas or diesel forklifts. I have reorganized an entire warehouse for ease of operations, as well as safety. I have recently added data entry to my skills so that I can operate a warehouse with use of computer networking as well. I am confident that my warehouse skills are an excellent match for your company.

Example #4

For the past eight years, I have contributed to the growth of ST Printing Company by developing the marketing and advertising campaign for local radio and newspapers. The company grew from approximately \$500,000 to over \$1 million in gross revenues during this period. At a national trade show in 1995, my contemporaries recognized my skills in commercial art and marketing text. I have excellent telephone skills and work well with our long-distance customers through my exceptional phone sales skills.

Professional Transferable Skills

In this section you, will describe your skills that may be valuable in any industry and are important to the job you are applying to. Examples of transferable skills are being bilingual, having the ability to handle money, being organized, keeping accurate records, writing letters/reports, having problem solving abilities, working well independently or as a team member, etc.

Example:

I am bilingual, with fluency in English and Spanish, and I have acted as a translator, both verbally and in writing, on many occasions. I have worked on teams and have the ability to perform well both as a team leader and team member. I am a self-starter with the ability to see what needs to be done, and I will take on tasks without being asked.

Professional Strengths

What is it that you do really well? What are your strongest workplace traits? Drawing from examples you have already identified in your other profiles and propositions, single a few out and stress these as your strengths. How would you describe yourself? What would a boss or co-worker say about your strengths? Are you a problem solver, team player, good listener, quick learner, ethical, able to work under pressure, punctual, etc?.

Example:

One of my greatest strengths is my ability to organize data, materials, and work processes. In fact, my organizational skills have been recognized twice in the last three years with the Employee of the Month Award because of the changes I implemented in office procedures and workflow.

Creating Your Brand

Professional/Personal Profiles

Now that you've seen good examples of these profiles/propositions, it's time to write your own.

Professional Job Specific Skills

Professional Value Statement

Transferrable Professional Skills

Professional / Personal Strengths

Writing Your 30-Second Summary

Look back at your profiles/propositions and pull your strongest statements to complete your summary.

Summarize your introduction in a few sentences, such as:

I have extensive customer service experience and excellent phone skills, and I am motivated to excel in the industry. I am a very organized self-starter with the ability to understand and meet customer expectations. I have a proven sales record and have surpassed all my sales goals by at least 10% consistently for the past five years. This increase also resulted in my team winning the sales award for six consecutive months, proving that I am an excellent addition to any team.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Once you have completed your written summary, practice reading the summary aloud. Continue practicing until you feel comfortable; then try practicing it with someone else and have them critique your summary. Now you can begin the process of practice and critique. Continue this process until you feel comfortable and the summary becomes natural. You should modify your summary to fit each job.

Get Your Story Straight

Prepare by developing themes and stories that back up your statements and substantiate your resume.

Stories support your statements, help you to reinforce your brand and answer the common questions regarding skills that you will face in all interviews.

Make sure your stories follow the STAR format:

- Situation/Task
- Action
- Result

Think up multiple stories for each theme and/or skill:

- Leadership
- Quantitative
- Teamwork
- Creativity/Problem Solving
- Initiative

Since you have a lot of experience in certain areas, you should be able to satisfy an interview question regarding specific skills by telling about a specific time when you demonstrated these skills.

Be prepared with your stories; it is one of the most beneficial exercises you do to become focused before your interview. If you are good at something, prove it with a story. You should be able to back up anything you say on your resume or in an interview with a story or an example of how you overcame a sticky situation with flying colors.

When answering general questions, highlight the themes you want to get across, but make sure they are valued by the company.

Story Examples

Situation/Task	Action	Result (Impact)	Skills Used	Where
Business Unit leaders wanted to develop a new strategic plan	Facilitated leadership team through conception and establishment of plan, performed research, conducted training on strategy development, coordinated meetings and deliverables	The completed and implemented plan drives the planning and decision making for the entire business unit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Working in cross-functional teams ▪ Leadership ▪ Problem solving ▪ Initiative ▪ Strategy development 	ABC Company
Develop logistics plan for 2000 March of Dimes WalkAmerica (Nashville, TN)	Had position of Logistics Chair, coordinated all aspects of plan: walk route, start/finish, pre and post party, emergency planning, foul-weather plan etc.	Flawless event that raised over \$250,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership ▪ Creativity ▪ Problem solving ▪ Priority setting 	Personal
Publicity Chairperson for "100% Owen"	Develop advertising and marketing for all events, came up with creative ways to get volunteers (such as...)	Signed up more than 50 new volunteers helping five charities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marketing ▪ Creativity ▪ Initiative 	Owen

Preparing for Interviews – Story Examples

Now, try to match your skills to the situational question that may asked in the interview.

Situation/Task: _____

Action: _____

Result: _____

Skills used:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Where/Company: _____

Situation/Task: _____

Action: _____

Result: _____

Skills used:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Where/Company: _____

Summary

Your 30-second summary is your opening statement, your first chance to demonstrate your “brand” of employee attitudes and behavior.

Identifying your values, transferable skills, technical skills and strengths prepares you to answer most interview questions and substantiate the information on your resume. Spend some time going over these propositions and profiles.

The ability to demonstrate through examples of previous accomplishments will make the interviewer believe that you can and will do it again.

Being specific is important and sometimes hard to do because the situation, such as managing multiple tasks at once, occurs regularly in your line of work. This makes it hard to point out as an important skill since, to you, it’s so “every-day.”

Try to answer every interview question with complete answers and examples as often as possible. Creating multiple stories for different situations will help. For example, you could use the format we have given you here to complete an entire storyboard that demonstrates skills such as multi-tasking, overcoming barriers to achieve a successful outcome, problem solving etc.

Prepare stories so that you can back up anything you say on your resume or in an interview with an example of how you overcame a sticky situation.

Preparation Tips

You're not ready yet. So far you've only prepared for the questions that might be asked. Although preparing for the questions is really important, presentation and preparation are even more important.

Here are some key things you should do to prepare for your interview.

1. Have your employment portfolio ready.
2. Learn everything you can about the job and how your previous experience, education, or training qualifies you for the position.
3. Find out the exact time of the interview, the name and title of the interviewer(s), and the company's address.
4. If you are unsure of how to get to the company's location, make a dry run at least one day before the interview.
5. Learn as much as you can about the company, its products, services, and history.
6. Be prepared to answer questions asked of you. Practice your answers.
7. Prepare in advance any questions you may wish to ask.
8. Make sure your grooming and dress meet the highest business standards.

First Impressions = Lasting Impressions

First impressions start from the minute you pull into the parking lot. You just don't know who may have a view of who's out there. Therefore, it is vitally important to remember that this is where the first impression of you may be formed.

Treat all staff as you would if you were already employed there. Some interviewers will ask secretaries or receptionists what their impression of you was. First, you want to be sure that you actually make an impression. You want to be remembered. Second, you want to ensure that the impression you make is good. Don't be rude or flippant to anyone; pay attention to your manners. Word will get back to the interviewer.

Here are some great tips to follow:

1. Shower; brush your teeth; clean your nails; comb your hair. Bad hygiene can really turn off an employer. Avoid perfumes and heavily scented lotions. Women should avoid heavy makeup and excessive jewelry.
2. Dress neatly, in clean clothes appropriate to the job setting. For an office job, this may mean a suit. For a construction job, less formal clothing makes sense but it should be clean, preferably with a collared shirt, and neatly pressed!
3. Start the interview before you walk in the front door by paying attention to your body language. Body language is a strong indicator of confidence.
4. Do not smoke before or during the interview; do not chew gum in the interview.

Introductions

Do you realize that your introduction may be the beginning of the end? The impression you make during your initial meeting may mean more than anything you say during the interview.

Recent studies have shown that interviewers/employers may actually make up their mind about you immediately. They look at your posture as you come forward. Your handshake, your voice, and your confidence in your introduction tell them everything they need to know. What you say later is important only because it allows them to confirm the decision they've already made about you.

Research shows that communication is:

- Body language and image 70%
- Tone of voice 20%
- What you say 10%

With these findings in mind, here are some invaluable ways to create an outstanding first impression. Let's start at the beginning.

Practice good manners. Say "please" and "thank you." If you are asked to take a seat and wait for the employer, make sure you sit straight, without slouching or fidgeting. It's ok if you prefer to stand, but avoid pacing; you want to maintain composure and the appearance of confidence. If there are company brochures and materials on display, by all means, look at them. This is a great way to demonstrate interest.

If you are invited to a mealtime interview, pay close attention to your table manners and behavior. Many employers use mealtime interviews to watch how you deal with the restaurant staff. This gives them a good indication of how you will treat subordinates in the workplace.

When the interviewer appears, you should approach with confidence. Walk with your back straight, your head up, looking at the person directly and your hand extended to shake hands.

It is all in the handshake! Here is what your handshake says about you.

- **The “Wet” handshake:** You’ve all shaken someone’s hand and immediately wanted to run to the restroom to wash your hands. To avoid the wet handshake, in your pocket carry a handkerchief or a tissue with powder wrapped in it.
- **The “Squeeze” handshake:** Ouch! If you are someone who wears a ring(s), this can be extremely painful. This kind of handshake is interpreted by the receiver as an assertion of dominance. An interview is not the place that you want to be perceived as trying to dominate the interviewer.
- **The “Softy” handshake:** This handshake has multiple interpretations depending on gender:
 - » Man to man – you will likely be perceived as weak and therefore unable to stand up when you need to.
 - » Man to woman – the woman may feel like the man is seeing her as the weaker sex and will likely perceive it as patronizing.
 - » Woman to woman – the perception may be that she doesn’t understand business etiquette, or she doesn’t want to shake my hand.
- **The “Two-handed” handshake:** This is also known as the “politician’s” handshake and may be perceived as insincere or presumptuous in a first meeting or interview situations.

So what is the perfect handshake? The perfect handshake is one that conveys a friendly, welcome attitude. “Generally, the person who extends their hand first has the ‘power’ in the setting,” says Dr. Nancy B. Irwin, a Los Angeles, California-based psychologist and therapeutic hypnotist. “In our American culture, the handshake shows interest, openness and confidence.”

Make sure you shake palm to palm, and keep your hand perpendicular to the ground. An upturned palm may subconsciously signal submissiveness – a downward palm, dominance.

The Introduction

The interviewer walks toward you, and you approach as described. Always allow the interviewer to take the lead.

Pay close attention to how the interviewer introduces him/herself and repeat their name when you introduce yourself. If the interviewer uses their first and last name, you should open with, "Good morning/afternoon Mr./Ms. Smith, I'm John Jones. It's good to meet you."

Never presume to use their first name.

If the interviewer gives you permission to use their first name, say "thank you" and repeat their first name. "Thank you, Ken."

What's in a Name? Why should you always follow this advice?

Using the interviewer's name serves multiple purposes:

1. It immediately shows the interviewer that you are paying attention.
2. Using their name now will help you remember it during the interview (you should absolutely use it later as well).
3. People like it when you use their name; it demonstrates interest and good manners.

If you are uncomfortable with handshakes and introductions, you must practice, practice, and practice some more.

We all claim not to judge people at first sight, and none of us like being judged at first sight. But we all know that this is a fact of life! You do it, too! It is simply human nature. So, it's up to you to make the best possible first impression.

Remember: You Never Get a Second Chance to Make a First Impression!

Interview Types

Phone Interview: Some employers will conduct interviews over the phone. They may either want to evaluate your phone skills (especially if you are applying for a position in the area of customer service) or they may want to hear your response to some prepared questions.

One-on-One Interview: This type of interview is the most common. They usually consist of the personnel manager, business owner, or hiring manager and you.

Panel Interview: These interviews take place with two or more representatives from a company and yourself. Usually the interviewers will take turns in asking the questions. A key point you may want to remember is that when an interviewer asks you a question, look at the asking interviewer initially, and while responding, let your eyes go to each of the panel members, making eye contact if possible. Be aware that, at times, they may record the interview.

Use these guidelines to help you get through these three most common types of interviews;

Interview Composure

Rule number one: Do not act foolishly or flippantly. Try to be yourself, and try to demonstrate a true picture of yourself to the interviewer, giving them a chance to see how you might work in the situations they present for you to address or comment on.

Do not overdo it: Of course, while you should act naturally, also remember to act professionally. Be on time. Be friendly and courteous, but not too casual. Have your thoughts and questions well organized.

Answer briefly: When it comes to talking during an interview, sometimes less is more. As a general rule, you should speak one-third of the time and definitely no more than half of the time. The best interviews involve a give-and-take exchange of information. To make this happen, you need to ask questions and try to draw out your interviewer rather than talking about yourself nonstop. When it's your turn to speak, don't hesitate to brag about yourself – but remember to be brief.

Open up: Do not be afraid to tell an interviewer about your professional self. When asked a question, do not just answer “yes” or “no.” Take the opportunity to talk about your goals and strong points. Often, this may alert the interviewer to an attribute that did not show up on your resume.

Tell it like it is: Finally, you should be honest, because not being honest is usually an attempt to hide a problem that will only get in the way of a good employee/company match in the future. For example, if you have no interest in finance you should say so.

You are also interviewing the company to see if you want the job.

Bring extra copies of your resume in your portfolio or briefcase and organize them for easy reference (resume, references, certificates, letters of recommendation, application, etc.).

Interview Tips

Review this list to remember the points we've discussed and get a few additional tips to ensure you are the best you can be in your interview.

- Always adopt a professional and business-like manner.
- Listen intently.
- Use strong, positive language.
- Be honest, but be discreet.
- Ask relevant questions.
- Wear a smile at all times.
- Never indicate that you are desperate for a job.
- Do not get into discussions about your personal life, and decline any "bait" to mention secrets about your present employer. The interviewer should respect your trustworthiness and integrity.
- Ensure that you do not carry the smell of any strong odors, for example, alcohol, garlic, perfume, or smoke.
- Do not fidget or play with your hair, clothing, items in your pockets, etc.
- Avoid negative phrases such as "I don't know" or "I'm not sure."
- Be persuasive, speaking in terms of what benefit you can bring to the company, rather than asking what the employer can give to you.
- Remain calm and do not rush your answers.

The Working Interview

Commonly used in the food service industry, where a chef may demonstrate cooking skills and techniques for a potential employer, the working interviewing method is now being used in many other fields. Learn what to expect so you can prepare and excel when you're called for a working interview.

How does the working interview help employers evaluate you?

1. The working interview is an opportunity for the employer to watch a job candidate "do the activities and functions of a job – live," says Stephen Morel, president and CEO of Pro Staff. "[The employer] gets a good look at what's beyond the resume."
2. Just as in a traditional job interview, the candidate meets the company's major players. What makes the working interview unique is that the candidate is often at the company for the entire day and is assigned a project he must successfully complete by day's end. The result of this project and the way the candidate handles the meetings – not to mention the overall stress of the day – helps the employer decide if this is the person to hire.
3. Morel says that in the last five years, more companies have embraced the concept. "It helps employers evaluate soft skills, like commitment, loyalty and work ethic, plus it shows attitude and abilities in real time," he explains. Employers can also evaluate whether a candidate's personality will be a good fit with the staff.

Show Your Stuff

For job seekers, the working interview is a chance to see "if this is the type of company they want to work for, as well as to find out about its culture," says Mattie Deed, a senior career counselor at the Allston/Brighton Resource Center, part of the Massachusetts One-Stop Career Centers operated by the city of Boston with support from Harvard University. "The employer gets to see your work and how well you perform under pressure. This is show-and-tell time." C-level executive candidates most likely will not have to go through a working interview, says Morel. As for the rest of us, prepare to dazzle the employer for the day.

A chef may need to work in an unfamiliar kitchen for the day, and customer service representatives commonly answer phones at a potential employer's facility. Candidates for creative jobs, such as copywriting and editing positions, may be required to write a web page or news article. A technical writer could be asked to write part of an instruction manual. And an executive assistant might answer phones, compose memos, send faxes, produce spreadsheets, and demonstrate other administrative skills.

Ace the Working Interview

A working interview can be exhausting. You must have energy, stamina and endurance, while demonstrating unstoppable grace under pressure. Showing your enthusiasm for the job may be as simple as smiling, sitting forward in your chair, and telling the employer that you appreciate the chance to show them what you do best – and then proving it.

When it comes to the working interview, the advice remains the same as with any other interview. “Practice, practice, practice,” advises Deed. “Record your voice on a tape recorder. Watch your body language in a mirror. Practice interviewing with a friend.” This back-to-basics advice also includes researching the company and knowing the industry. “Preparation minimizes the feelings of nervousness,” Deed says.

As always, the employer is evaluating how well you interview, how you dress, your body language and the way you interact with staff, along with myriad other characteristics, such as your enthusiasm, flexibility, and sense of humor.

By the end of the day, the job seeker may begin to lose focus or worse, get too comfortable. Don’t make that mistake, warns Deed. “Don’t let your guard down,” she says. “Don’t go in there expecting that these people are your friends.”

The Job Interview Checklist

Before the Interview:

- ✓ Have your employment portfolio ready.
- ✓ Learn everything you can about the job and how your previous experience, education, or training qualifies you for the position.
- ✓ Find out the exact time of the interview, the name and title of the interviewer(s), and the company's address.
- ✓ If you are unsure of how to get to the company's location, make a dry run at least one day before the interview.
- ✓ Learn as much as you can about the company, its products, services, and history.
- ✓ Be prepared to answer questions asked of you. Practice your answers.
- ✓ Prepare in advance any questions you may wish to ask.
- ✓ Do a mock interview, or video tape your mock interview.
- ✓ Make sure your grooming and dress meet the highest business standards.

The Interview:

- ✓ Go to the interview alone.
- ✓ Arrive approximately 10 minutes early. Find a restroom so that you can groom your hair and clothing.
- ✓ Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake and be seated when you are asked.
- ✓ Master the four C's of interviewing: be Confident, Courteous, Calm, and Competent.
- ✓ Your posture should be straight, but not stiff – relaxed, but not slouching.
- ✓ Be yourself! Speak clearly, enthusiastically, and intelligently.
- ✓ Avoid answering questions with only "Yes" or "No." Use questions as an opportunity to fully explain your best qualifications.
- ✓ Do not volunteer any negative information about yourself.
- ✓ When given the opportunity, ask questions about the company and the position.
- ✓ When exiting the interview, ask for a business card and ask when a hiring decision can be expected.

Your Portfolio:

- ✓ Five copies of your resume
- ✓ Five copies of your list of references
- ✓ Five copies of your letter(s) of recommendation (Letters should be current, within the last year if at all possible)
- ✓ Certificates / diplomas / transcripts (originals and copies)
- ✓ DMV records, if applicable
- ✓ Master application form

For your own reference, you may wish to include:

- ✓ Personal profile
- ✓ Professional accomplishments

These are sheets that you have developed for interview preparation and to refresh your memory before the interview.

Examples of Typical Interview Questions

1. **Tell me about yourself?**

Use this type of question as an opportunity to provide a brief summary of your education, work history to date, and your purpose for being at the interview. Develop and rehearse your response in advance.

2. **How did you learn of the job opening with our company?**

Explain that you have been conducting a very active employment search to locate a position that relates to your employment goals. Then explain how you learned of the employment opportunity (for example, word of mouth (networking), research, advertisement or any other means).

3. **Why would you like to work for our company?**

Use this as another opportunity to relate the company research you have done and share the positive information you have learned that makes employment with the company desirable to you.

4. **Why are you interested in this particular type of employment or career path?**

Provide a well-thought-out response that relates to your continuing career development. Always keep your responses brief and to the point.

5. **Why did you leave your last job?**

If your reason for leaving employment was due to a plant closing or downsizing, say so, but communicate the new career development opportunities this experience afforded you.

If your reason for leaving employment was voluntary on your part, say so, but communicate the positive change this step has made in your continuing career advancement.

If your reason for leaving employment was involuntary, say so in the most positive way possible. Keep the response brief and do not speak negatively of a former employer.

6. **We have many candidates for this position; why should we hire you over them?**

Structure your response something like this ...“I am not able to address the other candidates’ qualifications, but for myself, I know that I am a self-directed person, would be committed to this employment opportunity, and would work to be an asset to this company.” Other qualities to consider mentioning include... good attendance and punctuality, personal attributes, technical skills and related business skills.

7. Why have you changed occupations?

Be prepared to have a logical explanation for the changes, adjustments and directions your work history has taken. Communicate your excitement and enthusiasm for the new occupation.

8. What is one of your strengths? What is one of your weaknesses?

The interviewer is searching for negative factors to screen the job seeker out of the employment screening process.

Always respond with your strength first, "I believe my outstanding strength is _____, and my area to grow in might be _____." Relate a strength that is disguised as a weakness. For example: "I tend to be a perfectionist when perfection is not always needed to complete a project."

9. How would you describe your personality?

This type of question is the interviewer's attempt to verify his or her level of rapport with you. The bottom line is that employers want to hire people who will fit into the company, who will help turn a profit, function according to the budget, get along with everyone else, and make a positive contribution. Your response needs to reflect these desirable personality traits.

10. What are your long-term career plans?

Develop an overview of what your one-, five- and 10-year career development goals are, and be prepared to relate these goals effectively.

11. Do you have any questions of me? (Interviewer)

Always have two to five questions to ask the employer about the position or the company.

12. What kind of personality do you work best with and why?

This question could reveal your adaptability and flexibility. Make sure your answer reflects your ability to adapt and be flexible.

13. Tell me about your proudest achievement.

For this answer, you could pull from all your work experiences. It would be a good time to demonstrate your "stick-to-itiveness" and to explain how you take pride in your work.

14. What was the last project you headed up, and what was its outcome?

This question brings to light the very latest project for which you were responsible, and how you set about to organize the project.

15. **List five words that describe your character.**

Your answer to this question can demonstrate the fact that you have thought about your character and personal mission.

16. **Sell me this pencil.**

This question allows you to demonstrate your ability to think on the spot and your ability to come up with instant points to sell your product (yourself).

17. **Tell me the difference between good and exceptional.**

Your answer to this question can demonstrate your fine lines, and your ability to distinguish between an all-right performance and an outstanding performance.

18. **If you had to choose one, would you consider yourself a big-picture person or a detail-oriented person?**

Your answer to this question might give the interviewer some insight into how you tackle projects, if you use stories or situations to illustrate your point, or if you need concrete facts.

19. **Other questions you may be asked include:**

- Why do you feel you are qualified for this position?
- Please explain any gaps in your employment history?
- How does your past experience relate to this job?
- What skills do you feel this job requires?
- What salary are you looking for?
- What would you do if a supervisor told you to do something now and another supervisor told you to do it later?
- Can you think of anything that I may have forgotten to ask you?

Interview Evaluation Form

Following each interview, while it is still fresh in your mind, record how you felt about each of these areas. Write down any question that comes to mind regarding whether you should have said or done something different. Writing it down will help you to avoid the same thing in the next interview.

Non-verbal Communication

Smiles	Good	Could be improved by	
Eye Contact	Good	Could be improved by	
Firm Handshake	Good	Could be improved by	
Sitting Position	Good	Could be improved by	
Manner of Speech	Good	Could be improved by	
Appropriate face/ hand gestures	Good	Could be improved by	
Attitude	Good	Could be improved by	

Interviewing Skills

Understands the questions	Good	Could be improved by	
Explains experience/ training	Good	Could be improved by	
Describes strengths	Good	Could be improved by	
Explains Goals	Good	Could be improved by	
Effectively explains weaknesses/non-positive employment factors	Good	Could be improved by	
Give examples of accomplishments	Good	Could be improved by	
Asks appropriate questions	Good	Could be improved by	

Questions to Ask an Employer

You should always have some questions for the interviewer prepared in advance. This requires some planning, but will pay off because it demonstrates interest and tells the employer that you are not just looking for any job, but that a good match is part of your goal as well.

Remember that an interview is a two-way exchange of information in which both you and the employer are trying to gain information and insight.

1. Is this a newly created position?
2. How would I be trained or introduced to the position?
3. Who are the other people I would be working with?
4. Which duties are most important for this position?
5. How is the company structured?
6. Could you please describe a typical workday for me?
7. What are the company's goals?
8. What changes do you predict in this industry in the next five years?
9. How is performance measured in the position?
10. How does an employee advance in your company?
11. What are the primary results you would like someone in this position to produce?
12. Could you describe the work environment for me, please?
13. Is this company part of a larger corporation?
14. Is the work flow in your department steady, or does it go through cycles or phases?
15. What makes this company different from its competitors?
16. What is the next step in the interview process?

Follow Up

After the Interview – Keep Doors Open

- Send, fax, or e-mail a “Thank You” letter to the interviewer if you are still interested in the position. This is an excellent opportunity to remind the recruiter of your qualifications.
- Second or follow-up interviews may be held two to four days after the initial interview. These interviews usually take place at the organization’s office, may last several hours, and may involve testing and or meeting with other departmental team members or managers.
- You may not receive an on-the-spot job offer. Recognize that many organizations interview a number of candidates. It may also take weeks before hiring decisions are made.
- If you do not get an offer after the first few interviews, don’t be discouraged. Many well-qualified people go through numerous interviews before finally being hired. With each interview, you are gaining valuable practice and expertise for handling the next one.
- After the interview, write down some of the questions that were asked of you, so that you can practice your responses.
- Secondary Contacts – after you send a “Thank You” letter and you have not heard from the employer –
 1. Call and reiterate your interest in the position, using your 30-second summary as a reminder of your skills and qualifications.
 2. Send a second “Thank You” letter if you were declined, stating that although you were not hired for the last position, you would like your application to be kept on file for future openings. This shows a very professional attitude.
 3. With such wide use of e-mail, it is acceptable to follow up by way of e-mail to a perspective employer.
- Keep an accurate file and update your job search with your follow-up information. This will help you remember whether you have already followed up or whether it is now time to follow up with the employer.

Following Up

A Follow-Up Call Wins the Interview

by Joe Turner

Monster Contributing Writer

You've sent your resume to three (or 16 or 110) prospective employers, so you've done your part. Now all you have to do is sit back and wait for the phone to ring. But why is nothing happening?

We've got news for you: Your phone will never ring. The fact you sent your resume in response to job postings means very little in the grand scheme of things. The search industry has designed the search process to cater to employers' needs, not yours -- even if you're a perfect match for a posted job. By falling into this trap, you've aligned yourself with the masses to take a number and wait and play the game on their terms.

Meanwhile, another more enterprising candidate slips in by way of a referral or a well-placed phone call and gets an interview and a possible job offer. All this happened while your resume sat forever lost in the crush of paper and electrons as you waited by the phone.

So how do you get past the pile of resumes and in the door? After you send a resume or an introductory letter, always make a follow-up call. Remember, it's the conversation that gets you the interview. Here's how to get on the phone and into the interview process.

Why Should You Follow Up?

Consider this scenario: Yours may be one of more than 100 resumes sent in response to a job posting. Three days later, you call the manager to follow up. You are most likely the only candidate with the initiative and drive to do this. With a decent presentation, you could win an interview for later that week. Meanwhile, your resume might have stayed buried in a huge stack and never discovered. Don't leave this to chance. This is no time to be bashful about initiating these calls.

Who Do You Call?

Never call human resources or an in-house recruiter. These people have no vested interest in talking with you. In fact, they don't want to talk to you. You'll only foul up their process. If you want to get hired, you need to talk with an actual hiring manager. If that's a mid-level project supervisor or the vice president of engineering, so be it.

Find out who this person is before you send your resume anywhere. You can locate the names of these people through various sources, including the company Web site's About Us/Management Team page, phoning the company receptionist, or subscribing to a corporate research service like Hoovers, ThomasNet or Lead411.

In short, your job search is just that: Your job search. Take control and drive the process yourself. Don't play by others' rules, putting your future in the hands of search industry bureaucrats. Get into the driver's seat and make their phone ring with a follow-up call every time you send a resume or introductory letter.

Thank You Letter

(Sample)

June 2, 2012

Ms. Honey Bee Williams
435 South Hive Road
Sugar Hill, CA 98900

Mr. Samuel Williams
Director or Personnel
Hines 57 Company
4567 Red Road
Sugar Hill, CA 98900

Dear Mr. Williams

Thank you for the interview on Tuesday, June 2, 2012. I enjoyed meeting you and several of the plant staff during the tour. I was very impressed with the family attitude you have cultivated at Hines. I agree that a pleasant work environment is far more important to productivity than most supervisors realize. In my previous position as payroll clerk, I found that even small things such as remembering a person's birthday did a lot toward creating a positive work environment. Your company's attitude is one of the primary reasons I am so interested in joining your team.

I also wanted to mention that as I reviewed the description of the job requirements you provided me, it occurred that I had forgotten to tell you about my experience in planning and installing a departmental budgeting system for a consumer product manufacturer.

I look forward to talking with you at the end of the week about the opportunity to join the Hines Company family as your new Bookkeeper. I know I will find it both satisfying and exciting.

Sincerely,

Honey Bee Wilson

Some Common Reasons for Rejecting Candidates

- Poor personal appearance
- Unrealistic expectations regarding career, salary, or organization
- Weak communication skills
- Lack of in-depth knowledge in chosen area of specialization
- Failure to demonstrate the ability to produce results (both orally and on resume)
- Failure to convince the interviewer (you must take charge)
- Lack of preparation (before you go to the interview – do your homework)
- Vague or evasive answers (if you don't know the answer, say so)
- Pattern or history of work-related problems
- Argumentative, confrontational, or aggressive behavior
- Lack of career focus or sense of direction
- Technically qualified, but a poor fit with other members of the work group or project team
- False or misleading statements regarding qualifications
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm
- Too much interest in money and benefits
- Criticizing former employers
- Some combination of the above items that make this candidate a higher risk; so a safer candidate is chosen.

Job Search Log

Company Name & Address	Position	Contact	Phone Numbers	Dates	Outcome
		Name:	Tel. #:	Sent:	
		Title:	Fax #:	Follow-up:	
		Email:		Interview:	

Company Name & Address	Position	Contact	Phone Numbers	Dates	Outcome
		Name:	Tel. #:	Sent:	
		Title:	Fax #:	Follow-up:	
		Email:		Interview:	

Company Name & Address	Position	Contact	Phone Numbers	Dates	Outcome
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Company Name & Address	Position	Contact	Phone Numbers	Dates	Outcome
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Company Name & Address	Position	Contact		Phone Numbers		Dates		Outcome	
		Name:		Tel. #:		Sent:			
		Title:		Fax #:		Follow-up:			
		Email:					Interview:		
Company Name & Address	Position	Contact		Phone Numbers		Dates		Outcome	
		Name:		Tel. #:		Sent:			
		Title:		Fax #:		Follow-up:			
		Email:					Interview:		
Company Name & Address	Position	Contact		Phone Numbers		Dates		Outcome	
		Name:		Tel. #:		Sent:			
		Title:		Fax #:		Follow-up:			
		Email:					Interview:		
Company Name & Address	Position	Contact		Phone Numbers		Dates		Outcome	
		Name:		Tel. #:		Sent:			
		Title:		Fax #:		Follow-up:			
		Email:					Interview:		
Company Name & Address	Position	Contact		Phone Numbers		Dates		Outcome	
		Name:		Tel. #:		Sent:			
		Title:		Fax #:		Follow-up:			
		Email:					Interview:		

Job&Career Centers



Fillmore

Fillmore Community Service Center
828 Ventura Street, Suite 200
(805) 524-8666

Moorpark

Moorpark Community Service Center
(Ruben Castro Human Services Center)
612B Spring Road, Suite 301
(805) 523-5444

Oxnard

West Oxnard Job & Career Center
635 S. Ventura Road
(805) 204-5100

Santa Paula

Santa Clara Valley Job & Career Center
725 E. Main Street, Suite 101
(805) 933-8300

Simi Valley

East County Job & Career Center
980 Enchanted Way, Suite 105
(805) 955-2282

Thousand Oaks

Thousand Oaks Community Service Center
80 East Hillcrest Drive, Suite 200
(805) 449-7320

Ventura

Ventura Job & Career Center
4651 Telephone Road, Suite 200
(805) 654-3434

Employment Services Information

(800) 500-7705
www.venturacountyjcc.org

Employer Services

HSA-Employer-Services@ventura.org



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www.wib.ventura.org



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www.vchsa.org